

# The Semaphore

A Publication of the TELEGRAPH HILL DWELLERS

Issue 194

Spring 2011

## **New Galleries Renaissance in North Beach**

**see page 11**

# WHEN BEBOP FILLED the NIGHT

By Art Peterson

In 1951, while I was a high-school student, my girlfriend and I would make trips from Berkeley to the corner of Turk and Hyde streets in the Tenderloin. Here, at the legendary jazz club, The Blackhawk, we would be ensconced behind a chicken-wire barrier that separated underage patrons from their hipster elders. It was from this “cage” that we would “dig” the energizing sounds of Dave Brubeck, Gerry Mulligan and other jazz greats.

Entrée to the club by underage fans continued for a couple more years until Mayor George Christopher put the caboch on such access, claiming in an unfortunately worded statement, “One of these nights, a young girl is going to be raped in the parking lot outside that club, and who are they going to blame for that act? — the mayor of San Francisco.”

Ten years later, on returning to the Bay Area, I was able to drink with the big boys at The Blackhawk, but the jazz scene had shifted to North Beach, specifically to the Jazz Workshop, where the center of the action was at 473 Broadway. The Workshop was owned by lawyer Art Auerbach, who loved jazz but did not profess to be the sharpest of businessmen.

Up the block from the Workshop at 401 Broadway was Basin Street West, the site of the now defunct Crowbar, where according to one report, “Duke Ellington held court between sets in his underwear and a silk robe, blowing air kisses to the ladies gathered there as he worked on his score for the Concert of Sacred Music to be performed at Grace Cathedral.”

Down Kearny, on what is now “porno row,” was the Off Broadway, where a not particularly sympathetic listener claimed “your deaf Aunt Agatha could have tuned in on the music of Stan Kenton from three blocks away.”

Across the street from the Workshop was Sugar Hill where Carmen McRae was a regular. On one occasion she was joined by Dizzy Gillespie, who, between sets at the Workshop, braved the mid-block Broadway traffic to cross the street and join McRae on a couple of choruses of “I Left My Heart in San Francisco.” Also on the east side of the street was El Matador, the site of the now Horizon Lounge, which was owned by bon vivant and bullfighting enthusiast Barnaby Conrad. He hired

John Horton Cooper as his house pianist, who, it was said, was able on a slow night to play piano and make chess moves at the same time.

Most of these places featured musicians in the modernist bebop mode, but in 1958 when Richard Hadlock (who hosts the amazing Annals of Jazz show on KCSM Sunday nights) came west to write jazz criticism for the *Examiner*, he was surprised at how eclectic the jazz scene was in the city compared with New York. Traditional jazz was still very much part of the scene. “Turk Murphy had opened Easy Street and the Tin Angel and the Kewpie Doll, in North Beach, also featured New Orleans-influenced music.”

Yet the Workshop remained central to the action. Between 1961 and 1964, a number of “Live at the Jazz Workshop” albums were produced; most of them are still available. These performances featured artists such as James Moody, Barry Harris, Cannonball Adderley, Charlie Mingus and Thelonius Monk. (I was at one of these Monk performances and witnessed him walking up and down Broadway between sets talking to himself and violently waving his arms. As a young admirer of the great man’s music, who had never heard of bipolar disease — a term that had probably not yet been invented — I was quite disoriented myself.)

Perhaps the Workshop’s star attraction during these years was Cannonball Adderley whose spirited and relatively accessible music was a hit with the fans. In 1959, one reviewer wrote, “when the group finished ‘Hi-Fly’ — its closing number after a four-week engagement — the audience cheered, whistled and clapped for 15 minutes.”

On one evening during this run, Russian composer Dimitri Shostakovich was in the audience for his first experience with American jazz. He made no comment, smiled appreciatively several times and applauded vigorously on occasion. One commentator noted, however, that Shostakovich and his entourage were probably the only audience members during these four weeks who did not move a muscle in time with the band.

While the Workshop, “whose small space,” according to Hadlock, “was hardly able to contain the great music performed there,” drew large crowds that often spilled onto the street, running a jazz club, as Auerbach found out, was not an easy business. Not untypical was the case

*continued on page 7*

## THD IS MORE THAN POLITICS

When Kathleen Cannon, *The Semaphore*’s former ad salesperson, would solicit local merchants for ads, she would point up Telegraph Hill and ask rhetorically, “See Coit Tower up there? Well, you wouldn’t, if it weren’t for the Telegraph Hill Dwellers.”

True Enough, In its 50-years-plus history, THD has fought many political battles, including the struggle to establish the 40-foot height limit that today allows us to view Coit Tower as a welcoming anchor in our neighborhood. THD is why our neighborhood continues to be free of the chain stores that would dilute our community’s special quality.

We are about a lot more, however, than fighting City Hall. We are about building a beautiful and vital corner of our great city. That’s why we took the lead in the restoration of Pioneer Park and worked with Friends of the Urban Forest to plant 400 trees all around the Hill.

It’s THD that sponsors the annual North Beach ArtWalk, organizes candidates’ nights and issue forums and helps to make possible Movie Nights in Washington Square.

But we want to do more. We want to be the neighborhood barbershop, where all members of our “small town” can tell stories, argue ideas and get to know each other.

**This is why we are distributing this newly formatted issue of *The Semaphore* to households in the neighborhood. We want you to join us so your ideas can be heard. Fill out the new members form on page 15, enclose a dues check, and we will call you for a chat just like a couple of small-town neighbors kvetching over the back fence.**

Also let us know what you think of our new format at [art.peterson@thd.org](mailto:art.peterson@thd.org)

Art Peterson  
*Semaphore Editor*



Frank Phipps plays bass trumpet at the Cellar, circa 1959.

PHOTO: C.R. SNYDER, COURTESY FoundSF.org





# PRESIDENT'S CORNER



By Jon Golinger

We live here because Telegraph Hill is a special place in this special city. Some 105 years ago, when the great quake and fire of 1906 ravaged most of San Francisco, it surrounded Telegraph Hill and threatened to engulf it. Brave residents and firefighters banded together and fought for the Hill. They fought for it because they loved it. Together, they saved it.

Today, Telegraph Hill and North Beach remain an oasis for residents, visitors, merchants, artists and so many San Franciscans when sometimes the whole world seems to be coming down all around us. While life on the Hill comes with its challenges, we live here because we love it. That's why, for 57 years, residents have banded together as members of the Telegraph Hill Dwellers to celebrate, beautify, improve and protect this neighborhood we love.

In setting our priorities for the year ahead, the THD Board looked to our members for input, insight and ideas. Thanks to the dozens of THD members who so generously took the time to fill out the 2010 THD member survey last fall, we now have a wealth of valuable information to supplement what we already know is important from talking to our neighbors everyday.

Some highlights from the results of the 2010 THD member survey:

## QUALITY OF LIFE

91 percent of survey respondents said that "neighborhood character" is the most compelling reason why they live here. The next highest reasons were "proximity to downtown" (69 percent) and "bay views" (66 percent).

## NEIGHBORHOOD PRESERVATION & LAND USE

91 percent of survey respondents support the 40-foot height limit for buildings in North Beach, on Telegraph Hill and on the northeast waterfront.

49 percent of survey respondents support the Port of San Francisco's proposal to build a cruise ship terminal at Pier 27, while 21 percent object to the proposal.

76 percent of survey respondents chose "parks/open space" as their top choice for what should be built on the northern waterfront seawall lots, should they be developed. The next highest choices were "active recreation" (47 percent) and "playground" (38 percent). Just 7 percent said they would like to see the seawall lots remain parking lots.

56 percent of survey respondents object to the pro-

posed 8 Washington St. luxury condo project, while 25 percent support the project.

## LOCAL BUSINESSES

83 percent of survey respondents selected "hardware store" as the top neighborhood business they would like to see added in the neighborhood. The next highest choices were "full-service grocery store" (50 percent), "shoe repair store" (47 percent) and "meat & fish market" (41 percent).

74 percent of survey respondents said they shop at the Ferry Building Farmers' Market.

42 percent of survey respondents said they would subscribe to the creation of a neighborhood co-operative grocery, while 28 percent said they might participate.

## NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

26 percent of survey respondents strongly support the San Francisco Public Library's plan to build a new library on "the Triangle" at 701 Lombard, while 25 percent strongly object to the plan. 21 percent of respondents somewhat support the proposal, 4 percent somewhat object to it, 7 percent are neutral and 12 percent need more information.

48 percent of survey respondents said they attend the annual North Beach Festival, while 48 percent said they do not attend the North Beach Festival.

## PARKING, TRAFFIC & TRANSPORTATION:

80 percent of survey respondents own a car.

66 percent of survey respondents said they regularly ride Muni.

22 percent of survey respondents strongly support the pending 1.7 mile central subway extension



Vera Ransom in garden next to 21 Alta St. in 1940.

into Chinatown, while 31 percent strongly object to the plan. 18 percent somewhat support the plan, 3 percent somewhat object, 7 percent are somewhat neutral and 10 percent need more information.

For complete results of the THD 2010 member survey, please visit [www.thd.org](http://www.thd.org).

Thank you to all of the THD members who took the time to complete the survey and to those who donated their time to coordinate, distribute and compile the survey results. Special thanks to Greg Chiampon and Termeh Yeghiazarian.

I also want to recognize two people who exemplify the best of THD.

We owe a debt of gratitude for the invaluable contribution of Immediate Past THD President Vedica Puri. Vedica gave years of service and hard work as an outstanding president of THD. As all good presidents do, Vedica left THD a better organization than she found it, steering THD through difficult times while remaining poised and professional. Vedica, thank you.

Finally, THD is nothing without the continued dedication and support of its members. We celebrate our new members, but we absolutely adore those who have continued to support THD over the years, through thick and thin. Vera Ransom was a member of THD at its inception and she has remained a member for each of THD's 57 years of existence. Vera turns 99 on June 11 and recently renewed her THD membership for yet another year. From all of us on the Hill, Happy Birthday Vera. You make us proud to call ourselves Telegraph Hill Dwellers.

## THD BOARD MOTIONS FOR THE MONTHS OF FEBRUARY-MARCH 2011

### FEB. 8, 2011 BOARD MEETING:

**Motion:** Community Vision for San Francisco's Northeast Waterfront Be it resolved that THD joins the Friends of Golden Gateway, the Barbary Coast Neighborhood Association and the Golden Gateway Tenants Association as endorsers of the Community Vision for San Francisco's Northeast Waterfront. (Passed unanimously.)

### MARCH 15, 2011 BOARD MEETING:

**Motion:** THD approves an expenditure of up to \$5,000 from the portion of the Jack Early Bequest designated for trees throughout Telegraph Hill to purchase and deliver five new large conifers to replace recently lost trees in Washington Square, as negotiated between THD and the S.F. Recreation and Parks Department. (Passed unanimously.)

**Motion:** THD will donate \$750 to the Tel Hi Neighborhood Center for its annual fundraiser. (Passed 8-5 with 2 abstentions.)

## CELEBRATE LIFE AND SUPPORT THE SEMAPHORE

Beginning with the next issue of *The Semaphore* readers will have the chance to honor special events in the lives of people they care about. If you want to celebrate a birthday, an anniversary, a graduation, or share an uplifting idea that you want your neighbors to know about, for \$45 you can place a business-sized announcement in *The Semaphore* that will proclaim your happiness to the world. Eighty dollars will get you a larger ad. Contact us at [carol@carolpeters.net](mailto:carol@carolpeters.net) or 415-956- 7817

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THD Board Member Termeh Yeghiazarian opens THD's Waterfront Forum at the Art Institute.

## THD HOSTS DISCUSSION on AMERICA'S CUP and the WATERFRONT

By Jon Golinger

**O**n March 16, more than 100 people gathered in the auditorium of the historic San Francisco Art Institute to participate in the first in a series of THD-sponsored community forums about issues affecting our neighborhood.

Entitled "San Francisco's Northern Waterfront: Past, Present and Future," the forum was held in two parts. The first, on the Port of San Francisco's rich and colorful past, was led by architectural historian Michael Corbett, author of the new book "Port City," and Mike Buhler, executive director of San Francisco Architectural Heritage. The audience was treated to a series of rarely seen photographs of historic piers and the people who built, fixed and worked on them for more than 150 years.

The second part of the forum focused on events surrounding the upcoming America's Cup race and allowed neighbors to ask questions of city officials involved in its planning. District 3 Supervisor David Chiu spoke about the opportunities the event will provide for the city to gain revenue and bring people to the waterfront. Port officials and Mike Martin, the city's America's Cup project manager, answered questions about the likely impact of America's Cup on the waterfront and the neighborhood. Jennifer Clary, of

the America's Cup Environmental Council (ACEC), discussed the challenges the America's Cup poses to the city's residents, infrastructure and the bay.

The ACEC, a coalition of 20 environmental organizations, transportation advocates and neighborhood groups, including THD, is committed to a successful and sustainable America's Cup. THD and the ACEC support the world-class America's Cup as an opportunity to showcase San Francisco Bay and its ecosystem. The city's Planning Department is preparing an Environmental Impact Report for the event as required by state law. Both THD and the ACEC submitted substantial comments focused on creating a carbon-neutral or carbon-negative event, thoroughly assessing its local, regional and global impact, including fiscal issues, protecting natural resources around and within the bay, developing mitigation programs that protect neighborhoods as well as historic and natural resources, identifying programs and mitigations that will assure that the America's Cup is a benefit for neighborhoods and the environment in the short and long term, and requiring that any waterfront development anticipated by the Host and Venue Agreement be subjected to rigorous public scrutiny.

The draft America's Cup environmental study is expected to be released in July. For more information please visit [www.thd.org](http://www.thd.org).



## NEW THD BOARD MEMBERS ARE VARIETY PACK

### Tom Noyes, Treasurer

**T**om, who is employed as a software engineer at Salesforce.com, has been a member of THD for the 13 years he and his wife, Mary, have lived on Vallejo Street, just above the neighborhood-supported Vallejo Street gardens. Known for his prowess as a bridge player, Tom, who has earned dual-citizenship as an Italian, takes pride in working tirelessly at being a *nonno*, that's Italian for grandfather.



Tom says, "I'd like to see THD reach out more into the community and expand our membership, primarily to younger people. I also want to help monitor the America's Cup modifications occurring to our waterfront and city, as we'll have to live with that long after the Cup."

### Lucie Faulkner, Board Member

**L**ucie, a San Francisco native who has lived in neighborhoods as varied as the Sunset and Cathedral Hill, found her home on Telegraph Hill two years ago, where the light and weather, among other ingredients, suit her just fine.

With a background in arts management, she has produced a documentary film on a neighborhood in New Orleans titled "Faubourg Tremé," which was



the inspiration for an HBO fiction series. She is preparing to do a film focused on American public libraries and the challenges they face today, using the San Francisco Main Library as a microcosm of what many urban libraries are dealing with.

Regarding THD she says, "I hope to help people understand the importance of the organization and the work it does to make this neighborhood special. I also hope to entice new members to join and get involved."

### Katelin Holloway, Board Member

**A**lthough Katelin and her husband, Ben Ramirez, have lived on Pfeiffer Street for eight years, they have been THD members for less than a year. Among the couples very San Francisco credentials is the fact that they were married in Jack Early Park near their home.



Katelin, the director of creativity & solution for start-up company Klout, was born in Fairbanks, Alaska, writes children's books, and, svelte as she is, insists she loves

macaroni and cheese.

"As a new board member of THD, I'd like to reinvigorate the positivity of our community and THD," she says. "We all live here because we love our neighborhood and our neighbors. We have much to learn from one another."

### Carlo Arreglo, Board Member

**C**arlo has lived on Child Street with his wife, Amy, for seven years and has been a THD member for a little more than a year. He teaches classes in the English Department at UC Berkeley where he is also a Ph.D. candidate.

He volunteers at Point Reyes National Seashore several times a week, where he is on the lookout for edible mushrooms and birds to identify.

As a THD Board member, he hopes to contribute to the Oral History Project and help out with Parks, Trees & Birds and *The Semaphore*.

"I hope that's not too ambitious," he says.



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# WHERE HAVE ALL the LONGSHOREMEN GONE?

By Dick Boyd

**M**y interest in longshoremen and what they do goes way back. I was a kid in the 1940s, working as a lumper in the produce district by the Embarcadero. I'd often eat meals at the Eagle Café, then at the foot of Telegraph Hill, but since moved to Pier 39. The place was always filled with longshoremen.

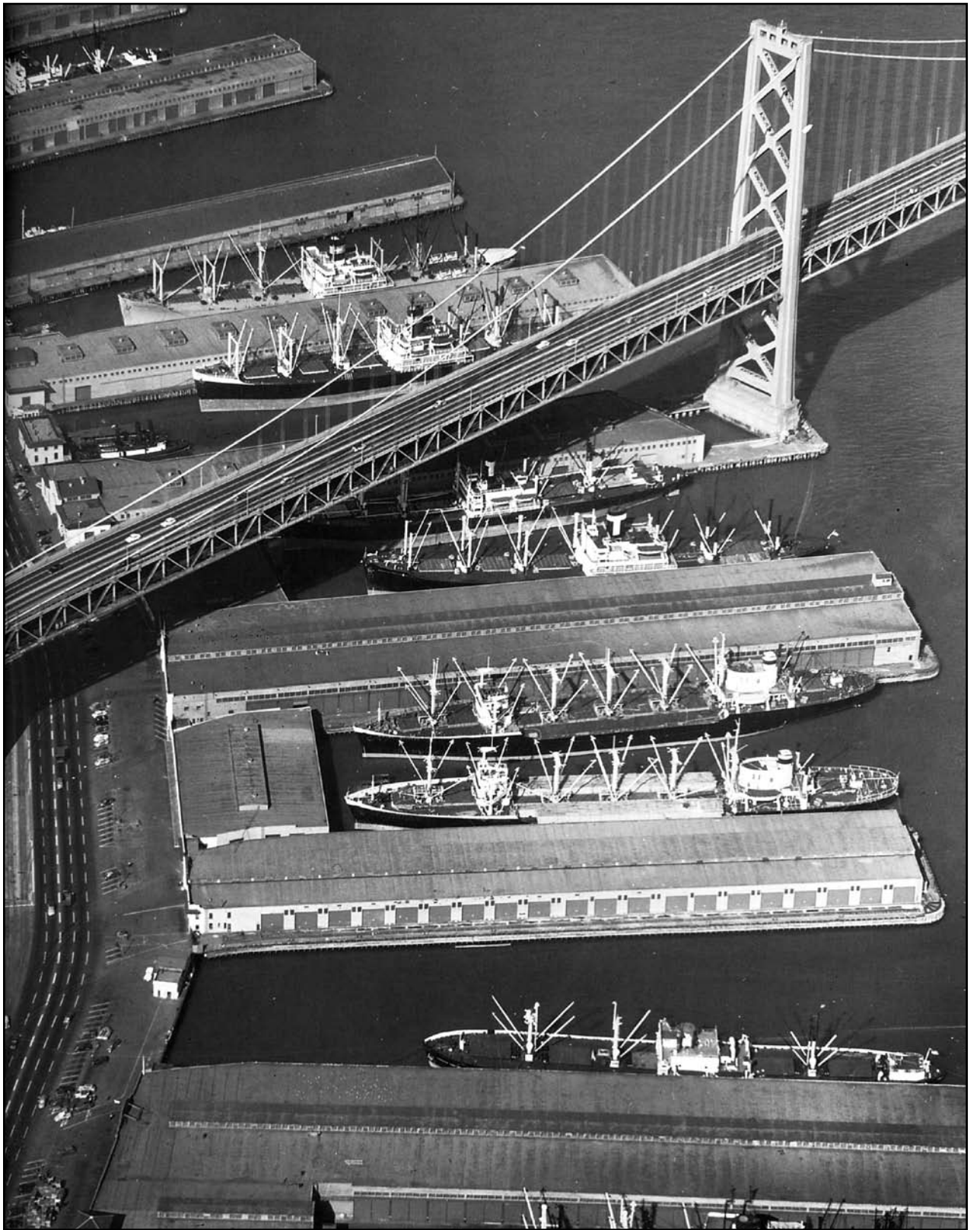
These men could be easily identified as they had a uniform of sorts that distinguished them from other laborers. It consisted of very sturdy black pants, called "Frisco Jeans," and "Hickory Shirts," that were white with black pin stripes that made them appear pale blue. The workers sported white flat caps, called "West Coast Stetsons," garnished with union buttons. There was a reason for the white hat. Safety. When workers were in a ship's hold, which was often poorly lit from the open hatch, the winch operator, who controlled slings loaded with cargo, had a better shot at seeing and avoiding hitting their heads.

San Francisco was the busiest port on the West Coast then and workers I met at the Eagle were proud and confident men, qualities that their union inspired. The longshoremen's union owes a great deal to Harry Bridges, its founder and long-time leader. Before the bloody, but successful, 1934 strike, working on the waterfront was hard, dangerous, low-paying work that often involved nepotism and/or kickbacks in the hiring and assigning of jobs. The work entailed fruitless hours and days waiting in a degrading "shape-up," in which guys gathered on the waterfront hoping to get hired.

Company tactics involved speed-ups, which had bosses forcing the workers to work faster and faster. If they couldn't keep up, they didn't get picked to work the next shift. Sometimes a shift lasted 30 hours or more with no overtime pay. Accidents were frequent. There were also "black listings" if you were caught trying to organize fellow workers. Like in the later witch-hunts of the McCarthy era, those who were blacklisted could not find work.

The company-controlled union was responsible for all these abuses. But then, in the early Great Depression years, two new unions rose to present a challenge: The International Longshoremen's Association (ILA) and the Marine Workers Industrial Union (MWIU). The MWIU had had ties to the Communist Party. Bridges had a certain sympathy for the MWIU, but he did not urge workers to join it. Instead, he favored the ILA. Still,

*continued on page 5*



Bay Bridge and working piers in San Francisco, 1948.

PHOTO: DUKE DOWNEY, SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE



## FROM THE DESK OF **SUPERVISOR CHIU**



**S**pring is in full swing in San Francisco, and our beautiful city by the bay is humming with activities. Here are some of the things my office has been working on in our neighborhoods.

### **Celebrating the North Beach Neighborhood Summit**

With more than 200 community members and 33 resource fair exhibitors, April 16th's North Beach Neighborhood Summit was a big success. Breakout groups of residents discussed quality of life, public safety and appropriate development. These were followed by a town hall Q&A with me that resulted in a number of ideas and proposals that we will work on in my office. With events such as the summit, North Beach and Telegraph Hill are building a stronger and more resilient community. Much thanks to all those who participated and helped to organize the summit—it's a great foundation on which we will continue to build.

### **Restricting Tour Buses on Residential Streets**

Many residents in North Beach and Telegraph Hill came to me with concerns over the increased number of tour buses driving through certain residential streets as they travel between Fisherman's Wharf and downtown. Our office has been working with community members and the MTA on a proposal to restrict tour buses on Mason, Powell and Stockton streets, between Lombard and Francisco streets, and on Francisco, Green and Lombard streets, between Mason and Stockton streets.

On May 6th, the MTA held a public hearing on the proposal. We look forward to this leading to quieter and safer neighborhoods.

### **Office Art Show by Telegraph Hill's Add Bonn**

For the past two months, my office has been proud to showcase the art of Add Bonn, a native San Franciscan and long time Telegraph Hill resident. Add turned 100 years old on April 22, and we hosted an art reception and birthday party in her honor. The show is curated to present styles that span her talented artistic career. Please stop by anytime to enjoy Add's depictions of Telegraph Hill sights and other works before our new art show goes up in late May.

### **Honoring Liguria Bakery**

With regards to another 100 year celebration, on May 17th, I honored Liguria Bakery as District 3's nominee for this year's Small Business Awards. Liguria Bakery needs no introduction to our neighborhood. Founded in 1911, it has remained in the hands of the same family and at the same location for a century. Widely understood to have the best focaccia in the Bay Area, Liguria Bakery already boasts countless rave reviews and generations of die-hard fans. I am happy to be adding one more accolade from the Board of Supervisors to honor the spirit and importance of small business for our community.

### **Parking in Levi's Square**

Last month, when Hult International Business

School, located in Levi's Plaza behind Telegraph Hill, the school shared its proposal to expand the size of its campus and student body. Residents expressed important concerns about what the expansion would mean for an already-challenging parking situation. My office participated in a series of meetings that resulted in a number of positive actions that will be taken to reduce the pressure caused by Hult and other businesses on neighborhood parking. This is a good first step to engaging the community stakeholders in a larger dialogue about how we can improve public transit, traffic and parking in the area.

### **Urban agriculture—Our Farmers' Market is Back**

Spring is here, and with it, the North Beach Farmers' Market has returned with fresh, local, and organic produce every Sunday from 9 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., from May 1st to Oct. 2nd, on Mason Street between Columbus and Lombard. I recently sponsored legislation to encourage urban agriculture, so that San Franciscans can more easily grow and sell their own produce. I encourage all of you to support a more sustainable food system and small regional farmers by shopping at the North Beach Farmers' Market and other farmers' markets around the city. As always, please don't hesitate to contact me or my staff to talk about ideas and issues important to you.





# ELVIS CHRIST

By Miriam Owen

I first encountered what I would come to call street poetry shortly after I arrived in North Beach. I found it in large concentrations in a few locations. I first saw it at Green and Columbus.

The poems are written on one-inch-wide masking tape with a black felt-tip marker. The lettering is artful with red, orange, green, pink or blue detailing in the open spaces of the letters. The lettered tape is affixed to the sidewalk with deliberate care. To anyone with affection for words, the effect is striking and playful. The words also can be profound, the inner workings of a mind that doesn't miss a beat. The attitude is anti-establishment and that suits me just fine. They are clever in a wonderfully original way.

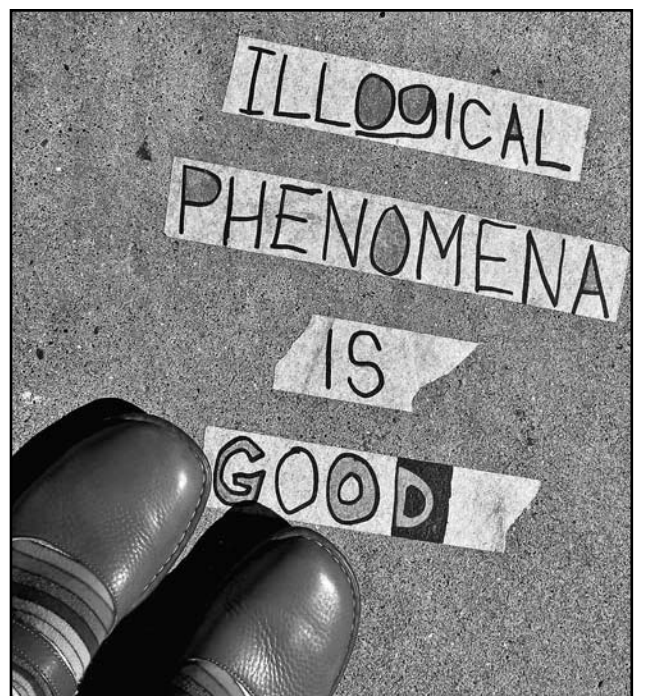
I have a fetish for taking photographs of my feet in my red shoes. The first poem I stood over with my red shoes and rainbow socks read: "Illogical Phenomenon is Good." That was in 2006. Now, five years later, I have

finally met the poet, Elvis Christ. I have encountered him at work on Grant and Union on several occasions. That seems to be his favorite place these days.

He let me interrupt him one morning as he was carefully coloring in the finished wording of a vertical poem affixed to the wall of Al's Attire which read: "Just when you think you have the rat-race beat faster rats blast past yer inanimate ass." He dropped his tape, pens and scissors onto the street and gave me his full attention.

He said he'd been away for three weeks and I asked him where he had been. He replied: "Whenever I fart, they think its Hiroshima." I said, that's a good one and he decided to jot it down before he forgot it. He never did say where he'd been, but mentioned he'd had a shower and cleaned up. His clothes looked new and warm especially the Peruvian knit cap with earflaps.

He asked me for a couple of bucks, which I gave him. I asked him if he recalled the "Illogical Phenomena is Good" statement and he said he didn't. Things pass



through; words are ephemeral for this North Beach poet.

*continued on page 7*

## Longshoremen *continued from page 4*



Longshoremen on strike, 1934.

IMAGE: DICK BOYD



ILWU Longshoremen march up Market Street, Labor Day 1939.

PHOTO: ILWU ARCHIVE

when management and government officials later tried to discredit Bridges, who became the union's "public face" for four decades, the longshore leader's sympathy for the

left came back to haunt him. Eventually, he beat all the charges against him, but the battle took 20 years.

The brewing conflict on the waterfront led to the maritime strike of 1934 and the bloody events of July 5th, known ever since as "Bloody Thursday." Two strike supporters were killed and dozens wounded by police.

These events touched off a citywide General Strike in support of the ILA and its allied marine unions that led to a union victory.

Three years later, West Coast longshoremen left the ILA and took on a new identity as the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union (ILWU), and for many years both the union and the waterfront prospered.

So what happened to the bustling San Francisco waterfront? The answer is containerization, that is, the use of standard interlobular containers that can be loaded mechanically onto ships. San Francisco's port presented some obstacles to containerization. First, there

was a lack of space along the waterfront to store containers. Second, there was the lack of easy access to east-bound trains and trucks. The solution to these problems lay across the bay. Oakland had ample waterfront space, excellent proximity to cross-country trains, easy access for trucks to major highways and the ability to employ a new shipping concept called "intermodel."

Intermodel simply means a container that would fit on trucks, trains and ships. Most give credit for the use of containers to trucking magnate Malcolm McLean of North Carolina. He understood the concept and need for the use of the intermodal system and experimented with the idea. Out west, about 1959, Matson Lines in San Francisco experimented with containerization, but didn't actively pursue the process.

Bridges, however, did grasp the idea. He knew containerization was going to be the way of the future. He realized that the traditional "break bulk" (hand-worked freight) and steam-winch cargo loading was going to be a thing of the past. So, in the late 1950s, he negotiated the Mechanization and Modernization (M & M) contract with the Pacific Maritime Association (PMA), which was the employers' bargaining agent. The results of this contract allowed employers to adopt the use of containers without disruption by the ILWU in exchange for some critical workers' benefits. There was a pension fund that encouraged early retirements. No one was pushed out of a job. Today, there are still older ILWU retirees enjoying their life because of the M & M contract. The productivity on the Pacific Coast ports, if not San Francisco, increased dramatically as a result of the M & M contract. Shipping costs declined dramatically. A container ship carrying 3,000 containers needs only a crew of 20 and can unload and reload with a 24-hour turn around.

The system also allowed for cheaper labor to be used overseas. Before containers, shipping costs were too high to make overseas labor markets practicable for U.S. manufacturers. By making shipping cheaper, the pace of globalization accelerated. Factories could be moved overseas where there was cheap labor, low rent

*continued on page 13*

## Broadway North Beach The Golden Years

### Always a good gift!

Check it out at [www.northbeachbook.com](http://www.northbeachbook.com).

A Saloon Keeper's Tales  
by Dick Boyd  
Foreword by Margo St. James

# ORIGINAL JOE'S COMING to NORTH BEACH

by Carol Peterson

At 6-foot-7, John Duggan is an enthusiastic, imposing man who looks like John F. Kennedy Jr. He is also the great-grandson of the man who established Original Joe's on Taylor Street some 73 years ago.

I met with him one recent afternoon because I had heard that Original Joe's was moving into the vacated building on the southwest corner of Stockton and Union streets that, before the demise of the not much lamented Joe DiMaggio's, had housed the historic Fior d' Italia. We met on the premises and John was accompanied by his Director of Operations Trish Herman, an old family friend who had agreed to step in when John needed help with the operation of the new restaurant. This perky, smart, blond seems as excited about Original Joe's as John does.

John says his great grandfather knew his way well around our neighborhood. "His name was Tony Rodin, a Croatian immigrant, who came to the U.S. in 1937. He worked at Lucca and New Joe's, both restaurants in North Beach. He used to hang out at a few of the old bars like Tony Niks that are still in the neighborhood. Then he opened Original Joe's on Taylor Street in the Tenderloin."

Original Joe's might still be on Taylor Street if it weren't for a disastrous fire about four years ago. "The damage was so severe," said John, "we couldn't even rebuild. It took us two years just to get all the insurance issues settled and then there was the issue of where we were going to locate. We wanted to come into a real neighborhood, where we could retain our soul and character. North Beach seemed the perfect fit. We also saw what Tony did across the street and it was very impressive. That raised the game that we would have good neighbors."



Original Joe's exterior at its old site in the Tenderloin.

In addition to John and Trish, the "we" includes John's father, his sister, Elena and his mother Marie, who will be the hostess just as she was on Taylor Street. "She is the reason many people come back to Joe's. She was known as the 'Queen of the Tenderloin,'" says John. "When Joe DiMaggio's came open, we had the opportunity to take a taste of Taylor Street to the DiMaggio site. It is a large, comfortable landmark spot in which to bring our landmark restaurant."

And what has given Original Joe's this landmark status? "We have maintained a consistent approach to comfortable food," said John. "Our menu is always the same . . . Look, we've been a success for over 70 years, so why mess with it?"

So all of the Original Joe's traditions will remain intact. "Many of our employees, who worked at Joe's for many years, will be back at the new location. Our wait staff will wear tuxes as they always have. We'll still have the exhibition kitchen along the back wall, with stools for people to eat at the counter. It has always been



Original Joe's interior at its old Taylor Street location.

our trademark. We have around 17 chefs and prep people that work in the kitchen and they will be wearing their traditional tall white hats. The main dining room is right off the kitchen. We are having our old booths from the restaurant recovered and installed. It will be like you are at Joe's." Trish told me, "The exterior of the building will be painted the Joe's original color and have

the same tile work as Taylor Street. We have a loyal following and they wouldn't have it any other way."

But there will be changes to the DiMaggio building and floor plan. "The first thing we decided to do is change the front doors. We want them to be welcoming, so we are taking out the big wooden doors and putting in glass doors, with a transom window at the top. Also in the front there will be small tiles on the entrance floor with Original Joe's embedded in it. We will have a lighted Joe's sign surrounding the cornice.

"There'll be new windows on each side of the building that we will open on a sunny day. This will really open up the interior and make it much lighter. As you walk in to the right, we are having a café, facing the park, and we want people to feel com-

fortable coming in and having a cup of coffee or meeting friends for lunch. Right behind the café, we have space for a banquet room that should accommodate around 30 people. We are having a large door installed that slides into the wall, so the room can be private or not. We also have a very private meeting room in the back that will be available for meetings or anything."

"How about the bar?" I asked John. In my view, it's been one of the best bars in North Beach.

"We love the space, but we will take out all the granite and turn into a Joe's bar, with wood and even an old clock. We'll have beer and wine on tap, with a two-bartender station. By the way, did you know my grandfather had wine on tap at Joe's in the '60s?"

"He was ahead of his time," I commented.

As John and Trish escorted me to the front door of the restaurant, there was a man sitting in the entry. John introduced me to his father, who is every bit as charming as his son. Of course, I wanted to know what he thought of the move.

"Sensational!" he said. "I am so excited to see my son and daughter carrying on their grandfather's tradition, especially since it is in North Beach where his roots were planted when he first came to America. Also, it will be very easy for our customers to find us here. I also love the location because as an Irish Catholic, I can look out the window of our restaurant and see SS Peter and Paul's Church. It can't get much better than that."

Readers may wonder if Original Joe's has any connection to Marin Joe's or any of the other Joe's. To that query John has a succinct reply. "No, my great-grandfather got a trademark for Original Joe's and that is who we are, the one and only." ♦



Original Joe's plan for renovation, facing Washington Square along Union Street.



of Miles Davis, who in 1964 was supposed to play a two-week gig at the Workshop. Davis' drummer was 18-year-old phenom Tony Williams. As California law did not allow minors in clubs that served liquor, Auerbach suspended his liquor license for the length of the engagement, charged a \$2 door charge and served soft drinks. Davis then failed to appear on several nights, once claiming he had a tooth pulled. On some other nights he just didn't show up. Auerbach had to refund the door charge to the disappointed audience members.

Davis was very much his own man. Hadlock tells of running into him at the Blackhawk and mentioning that tenor sax player Hank Mobley was playing at the Jazz Workshop. Davis, intrigued, told Hadlock, "Let's go." One problem, however, was that the Blackhawk owner, who had always tried to avoid charging a cover, had found it necessary to add a \$4 door charge to pay for the Davis run. That detail didn't stop Davis who left with Hadlock and stayed the rest of the night at the Workshop, not saying much other than commenting in his raspy voice on drummer Art Taylor. "AT never could keep a beat," he said.

Another musician who figured prominently in the Jazz Workshop scene was Charlie Mingus. A fierce and often scary showman, Mingus would sometimes crack a bullwhip during his performances. That ferocity was why Hadlock was concerned when, after he had written a not altogether complimentary review for *Downbeat* on one of Mingus' albums, two men "without necks" stopped by the Workshop and asked, "Are you Hadlock? Mingus sent us." That was enough to get Hadlock thinking he should stay arms length from Mingus. Not long after, when Mingus came to town, he was as friendly as he was capable of being and invited Hadlock to come hear

multitalented reed player Roland Kirk.

Mingus' quirky artistry could also inspire. Sculptor Richard Serra remembers an experience at the Workshop. "I was about 16 or 17 and had a fake ID. I sat down and had a drink. The performance was in the afternoon and there was a fan on. It was really loud and Mingus was going through his set and they were recording, and the bartender turned off the fan. Mingus had an apoplectic fit. He jumped over the bar and practically throttled the guy. 'That fan was one of my instruments,' he said. And it made me think, as someone who wanted to be an artist, that you had to pay attention all the time to everything that was going on, because everything was of potential use, if you could see the potential."

Not all the neighborhood jazz during these years was on Broadway. Green Street, off of upper Grant, was also a hub. The Anxious Asp at 528 Green — now Tatoo Bogaloo — had on its juke box the largest collection of Charlie Parker records west of the Mississippi, as well as the pages of the Kinsey Report posted as restroom wallpaper.

Down the street at 576 Green, a drab doorway now marks the entrance to what was once the Cellar, now between Caff   Sport and Citibank. The Cellar became a famous venue for poetry read to jazz. A groundbreaking LP recorded at the Cellar, featuring poets Lawrence Ferlinghetti and Kenneth Rexroth, became a de rigueur part of every hipster's record library.

The unsung heroine of the Cellar was poet Ruth Weiss, who worked as a cocktail waitress there during these years, but performed with great musicians such as Brew Moore and Ben Webster on Wednesday nights. She says, "Ferlinghetti and Rexroth were poets who read over jazz; but jazz was apart of me; I swung."



Ruth Weiss, 83 and still a poet, stands in front of her portrait at the Beat Museum, taken during the days she was reciting jazz and poetry at the Cellar.

Weiss came to San Francisco in 1956 and took up residence at 555 Montgomery, an address later famous as the location where Allen Ginsberg composed "Howl." Like Richard Brautegan, she sold little chap books of her poems for 20 cents each on the streets of North Beach. After a shift at the Cellar, and maybe a trek out to Bop City and the other Fillmore neighborhood clubs, she would return home to the roof of her Montgomery Street residence and shower in the building's only facility for that purpose as dawn emerged over the starlit city.

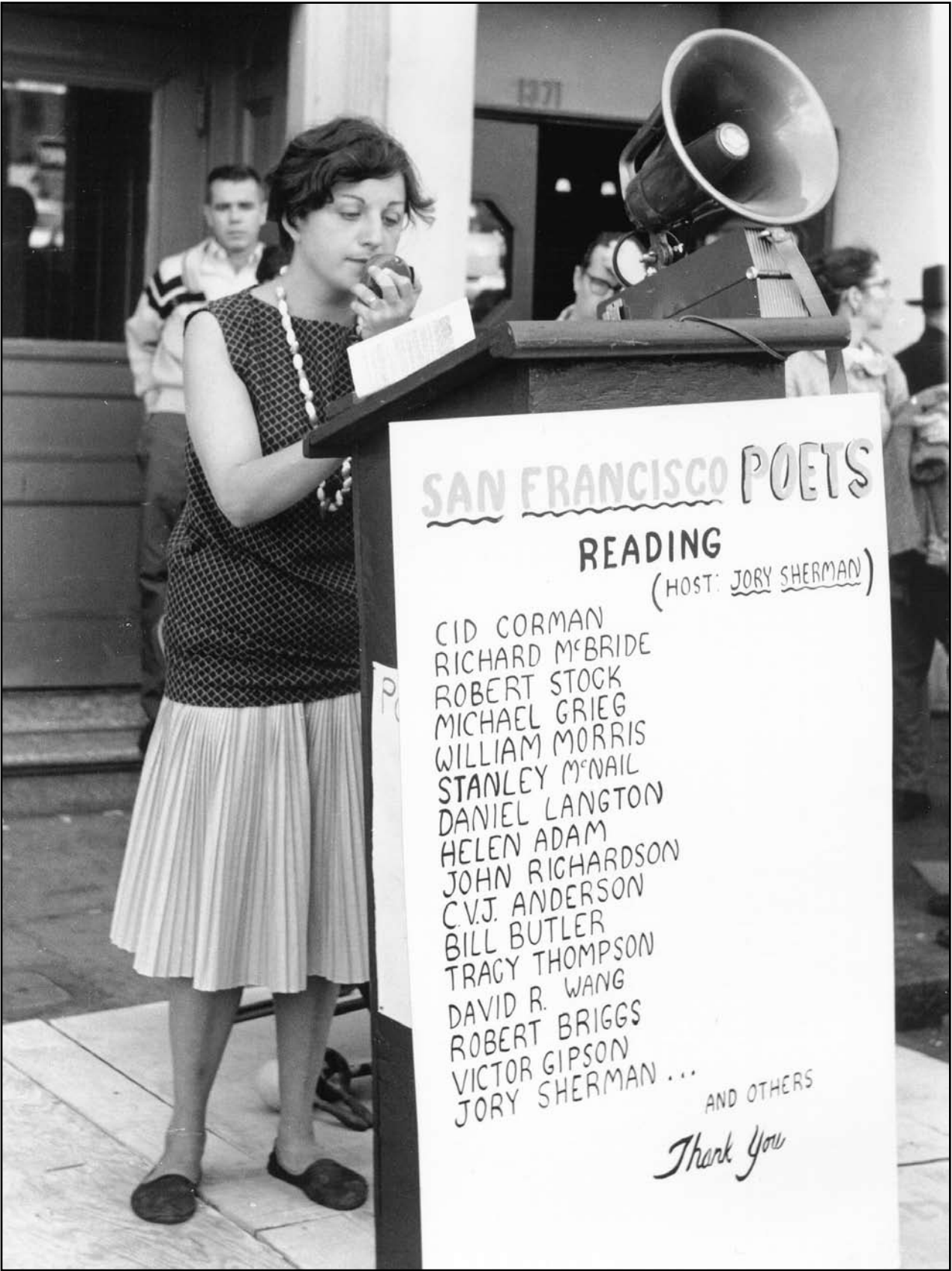
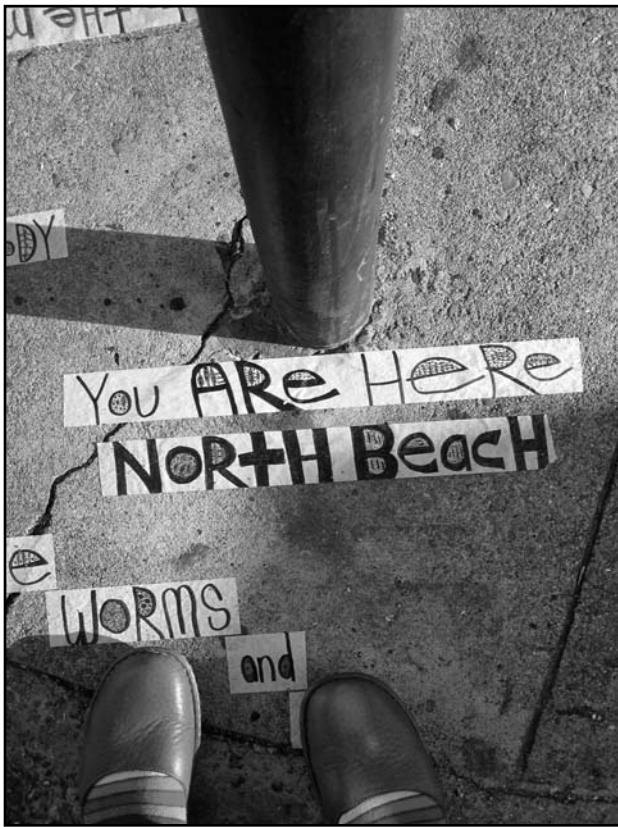
Today, as "gentlemen's clubs" proliferate, dance palaces provide hook-up venues for the young and libidinous, and cops square off with would-be gangbangers on Saturday nights, the neighborhood jazz scene from 40 years ago seems ancient history. Those of us of a certain age, however, recall well enough the cramped and smoke-filled rooms where Brew Moore's five chorus improvisations on "All the Things Your Are" were never enough.

Ruth Weiss' latest book is "Can't Stop the Bear" published in May by Divine Arts Press ([www.divineartsmedia.com](http://www.divineartsmedia.com)). Local jazz legend Larry Vukovitch contributed to this story.

Elvis Christ continued from page 5

I told Elvis that I had shown his poems to a friend who said, "get that man some more tape." As it turned out, Elvis had just run out of tape. I gave him \$20 and he was overjoyed. He said he could now buy some new pens as well. The next morning I saw new colors and thick black ink lettering:

**YOU ARE HERE  
NORTH BEACH**



Ruth Weiss reads at the Grant Avenue Fair in 1960.

PHOTO: C.R. SNYDER, COURTESY FoundSForg



# BIORDI ART IMPORTS

412 COLUMBUS AVE., NEAR VALLEJO STREET



PHOTOS BY SONIA SAVIO

By Chris Stockton

## The first in a series on the best of North Beach.

Passing by Biordi Art Imports without pausing to look in the window is close to impossible. The shop, which features majolica ceramics — Italian pieces with an opaque white glaze and painted in bright colors — always has something new, bright and exquisite. The pieces have been crafted from all around Italy. Some designs date to the 12th century while oth-

ers are inspired by recent artists such as Pablo Picasso. Many of these works would not exist were it not for shopowner, Gianfranco Savio, who nurtured their birth with individual craftsmen whom he has befriended.

Savio came to San Francisco in 1974, settled in North Beach, and married Carol, who he had met in Florence in 1969 while she was perfecting her Italian and he was finishing his master's degree in political science. Soon he was giving Italian lessons, but in 1975

he took a job selling pasta machines, espresso makers and other merchandise at Biordi Art Imports, a general Italian imports store founded by Emilio Biordi in November 1946. Within a couple of years, Savio acquired Biordi and began to introduce more ceramics into the store's offerings.

In the ensuing 20 years, he spearheaded the growth and appreciation of Italian majolica in the states by traveling to Italy two or three times annually, meeting with more and more craftsmen and importing a vast range of classic ceramics.

Biordi is a small space, but the shelves and tables are packed with majolica, with colors and designs that have been handed down from father to son, some for centuries. Each year, Savio's catalog expands. It now reaches loyal customers from Canada to Mexico; more than 40 percent of his business is mail order. Walk by on a December afternoon and note the piles of packages destined for homes across the country.

Savio still returns to Italy once or twice a year, seeking the finest ceramics and often finding something new to set along side old favorites, such as Della Robbias, produced near Florence and inspired by the mid-14th century designs of Luca Della Robbia.

One morning his daughter, Sonia Savio, told me about her favorite dinnerware designed by Franco Mari, who was challenged by her father to develop colorful geometric and rich organic borders. Originally, borders were the training ground for young ceramicists; Franco Mari's





artistry made them sing; Eugenio Ricciardelli, a student of Mari's, has now created 65 stunning full border patterns.

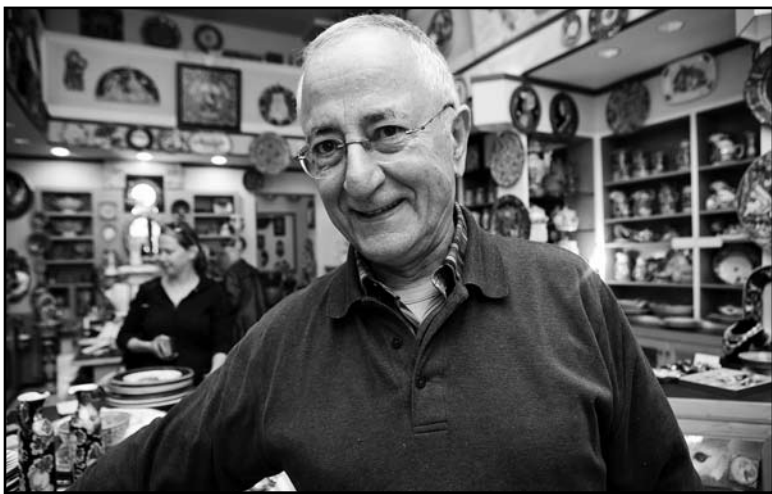
When you visit Biordi, look for Mari's and Ricciardelli's dinnerware, and also:

- the Della Robbias and Contrade plates and bowls. Look for an austere design with black borders and sitting deer from Deruta. It is a reproduction of a 13th century marble inlay in the Duomo of Siena.
- A series of plates and pasta bowls carefully monogrammed in any one of 14 original patterns, from the Cama studio in Deruta.
- A skillfully rendered pattern, also from the Cama studio, which features a stylized dragon designed by Raphael in the 16th century.
- A swirl of sardines encircling a mirror from the Vignoli studio in Faenza; each fish glistening as though suddenly struck by the light of the sun.
- A colorful tangle of pears and grapes sketched around a jar for biscotti, from the Pardi studio in Castelli, Emilio Biordi's hometown where pottery has been produced since the 13th century.
- An extraordinary array of blue Carnation dinnerware and serving pieces from Faenza, where the Carnation shops line the streets, and from which Savio has



selected the best from Bruno Brolli of Rimini for its clean color and very fine craftsmanship.

For Italians, the rooster is a symbol of good luck and prosperity. Perhaps the next time you pass by Biordi, you'll spot a rooster, standing tall in glorious color, chasing around the rim of a bowl, or drafted on a plate by ceramicists in Deruta with green leaves and green feathers, motifs dating from the 13th century. May Biordi Art Imports always have a rooster at this location where they have been for the past 65 years. ✦



Gianfranco Savio, Biordi owner





# BACHELORS on the HILL, CIRCA 1955

by Steve Hord

When in the mid 1950s, after graduating from Stanford and serving a stint in the Army, 26-year-old Jeffery Morshead moved to Telegraph Hill, the neighborhood was undergoing a kind of bargain-basement gentrification. The artists, poets, craftsmen and bohemians who had long been central to the scene were still around, but the landscape was also dotted with young men in suits and pert girls in hats.

Like Jeffery, these young professionals walked down the Hill each day to their jobs in the Financial District. But to hear Jeffery tell it, work wasn't at the top of their agendas. What interested them most was each other, young men and women feeling their way to intimacy in the years before the sexual revolution.

Telegraph Hill, especially the area around Union and Montgomery and Alta Street (where the "Duck House gang" lived), was a magnet for these 20-somethings. According to Jeff, for a young person, getting a place in this increasingly popular neighborhood wasn't easy. He and his potential roommate Louis Nohl, a Stanford fraternity brother, couldn't find

anything for less than \$100 a month. "After a month or so, Louis called me and said he had signed us up for a neat place at \$60 a month. I was furious. It was just like Louis to go off and obligate me for \$60, when I was making only \$550 a month as a credit clerk at Pacific National Bank." However, when Jeff calculated half of \$60 was \$30, he decided he could do it.

"The building, 220 Union, owned by Guido Lenci, is no longer there. Lenci had taken an old narrow wooden house and carved out four units. Our apartment had one room, two beds, a partition that came down to separate the kitchen from the living area and a tiny shower and bath."

But when Jeff and Louis walked onto their deck they had vistas to rival those seen from the digs of the most hoity-toity of San Francisco socialites. "We had a view of the waterfront from the Bay Bridge to the far tip of Treasure Island. We had a poster of all the ships' funnel markings and kept track of them coming and going below us. We nailed a wooden ladder to the deck and put a mattress on the roof where we could have cocktails, enjoying an even better view.

Spediacci's (later Speedy's) Grocery was just up the street. "He allowed us to charge. I think our bills got paid eventually."

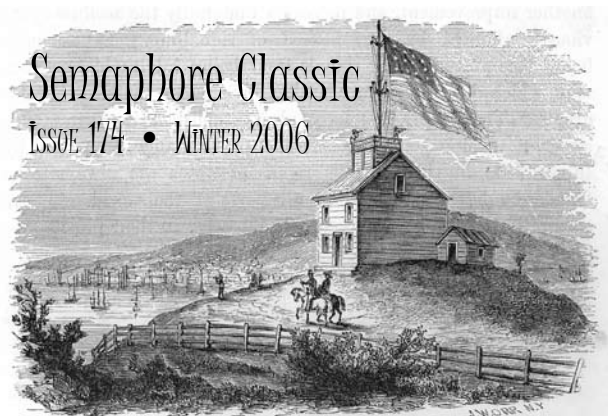
Across the street from Jeff's apartment was the Compound, an infamous hang-out of small apartments that opened onto a flat roof.

"On Friday nights, payday, we would gather at the Compound with our dates and barbeque chops and steaks."

In one of these apartments resided Bob McNear, perhaps the most desirable and notorious bachelor on the scene. Jeff's friend, Ann Seidel, told him of how she had arranged with the driver on the 39 bus to make a sudden stop at a certain intersection just so she could fall back into a seat next to Bob McNear and get acquainted.

Apparently getting to know Bob wasn't a particularly difficult task, as he was no shrinking violet. "At one time, Bob McNear invited the shah of Iran to cocktails at the Compound and we really expected him to come, as Bob's uncle had been ambassador to Iran. But two nights before, an envoy came over to check the place out. The next day, the shah sent his regrets. We had a party anyway."

Bob, Jeff and Steve Hord, who still lives on the Hill, were all members in good standing of the "Tuesday Downtown Operators and Observers Club." According to Jeff, the club consisted of about 20 bachelors who prowled the Financial District



Semaphore Classic  
ISSUE 174 • WINTER 2006

on the lookout for a girl who met their high standards. "We would then invite our latest discovery to join us for lunch at the Canterbury Hotel, as the only female guest. It was considered an honor to be invited, so much so that today far more ladies than we could have accommodated lay claim to having been invited. There are no records."

Jeff had his own way of establishing himself with young women. "I would make fold-down bars for the ladies to replace the fold-down board separating the kitchen from the living-bedroom in those small Telegraph Hill apartments. My bar customers would pay me by giving me dinner while I worked. The bars could become quite elaborate with shelves and bamboo sidings and wheels, sometimes taking me as many as four or five nights — and dinners — to finish."

When Jeff would get a date with one of these young women, the evening would go something like this: "I'd suggest dinner at a nice restaurant. We'd have martinis at my 220 Union place, than walk a block to the Shadows on Montgomery where, at this hour, I could count on an hour's wait. I would make no reservations, so I'd say, as if thinking of it for the first time, 'Hey let's skip this and head for the Old Spaghetti Factory for more of a fun evening.' This brought the evening's cost down from unaffordable to an All You Can Eat family-style price tag, and, in fact, it was 'more fun'."

Embedded in Jeff's account of young lives on the hill in the '50s is this story which says a lot about the physical longings of the young in pre-'60s America:

"How lucky could I get? The girl of my dreams (this week) invited me over to her place for dinner. Instead of the usual bobbing and weaving, she simply said, 'Come to bed, I can't wait.' Surprised — after all, she was from the east coast — I began fumbling about, but the really surprising thing was that I thought that this young lady was the sometimes girlfriend of the previously mentioned great lover, Bob McNear. He got all the foxy ones when they arrived on the Hill. But believe me, at the moment I wasn't complaining. It was mid-afternoon, the daylight streaming in the window, and the two of us were wrestling this way and that. 'Oh, Jeffery,' she said in a voice suddenly devoid of passion. That was the signal. Out of the closet, highball glass in hand, emerged a smiling Bob McNear.

"Cheers," he said."



With this issue of *The Semaphore* we begin a new feature, "Semaphore Classics," which will allow us to reprint some of most engaging and well-received articles from past issues.



Steve Hord, right, still a Hill resident, struts his bachelor stuff.

## Telegraph Hill Dwellers 4th Annual North Beach ArtWalk

### Call for Artists

Presented by the Art & Culture Committee

Join us Saturday, September 24th and Sunday the 25th for a weekend of your art, poetry, music or performance showing in multiple North Beach venues

\$25 registration fee gives you

- a listing on the ArtWalk map for your chosen location
- a piece of your art in the Live Worms group show
- an invitation to the Friday night Preview Party
- and a crowd of Bay Area art lovers visiting North Beach to enjoy all of the local creativity!

More information on our website [www.thd.org/art-and-culture](http://www.thd.org/art-and-culture). Download the ArtWalk application and send with your check to

**NB ArtWalk 2011, PO Box 330159,  
SF CA 94133**

Contact Julie at [artandculture@thd.org](mailto:artandculture@thd.org) for more information

## Beyond the Neighborhood

With this issue of *The Semaphore* we begin an occasional feature calling attention to worthy organizations outside our neighborhood that deserve our respect. Please let the editor know of other groups you would like to see featured.

## THE FAMILY SERVICE AGENCY

By Paul Gibson

There is Andre. He is 4 years old now. He came to Family Service Agency of San Francisco when he was 3. Before his first birthday, he had a heart transplant and the only early childhood program that could address Andre's health needs was FSA's Family Developmental Center.

There is Ming. He is 81 and suffering from multiple health conditions that limit his mobility. His family can no longer afford to live in San Francisco, so FSA picks Ming up twice a week so he can socialize with friends at its Older Adult Center. His case manager makes sure Ming is receiving food deliveries, monitors his health and makes home visits to ensure his home continues to be safe.

Then there is Andrew. He began hearing voices when he was 16. He didn't know it, but he was suffer-

ing his first psychotic break. Fortunately, his parents had heard of FSA's PREP program, a ground breaking partnership with UCSF that shows promise in preventing psychosis from converting to schizophrenia, if individuals enter the program early enough. Andrew is now planning for college.

Since 1889, FSA has been San Francisco's most important safety net. Operating more than 25 social service and mental health programs, FSA serves more than 16,000 of San Francisco's most vulnerable residents. If you are interested in helping FSA raise funds to help it continue to help individuals such as Andre, Ming and Andrew, please call Paul Gibson, development director at (415) 274-8310. To view video testimonials from FSA clients and others, visit [http://www.fsasf.org/abt\\_videos.html](http://www.fsasf.org/abt_videos.html).





# NEW GALLERIES SIGNAL ART RENAISSANCE IN NORTH BEACH

By Art Peterson

The photo of the Transamerica Building as seen from Telegraph Hill that graces the cover of our new format *Semaphore* is the work of photographer Craig Fonarow. He is among the artists who have recently taken gallery space in our neighborhood.

Here is a roundup of some of them:

## CRAIG FONAROW PHOTOGRAPHY



527 COLUMBUS AVE.

Craig found a home in San Francisco in 1991 after decades of being on the move, which took him to New York City, San Antonio, Los Angeles and numerous other cities.

While visiting street fairs in San Francisco, he noticed that few of the photographic works on display were of the city.

So he began to make the local scene his subject, selling his work in a kind of garage-sale format in front of his Leavenworth Street residence. Eventually, he began selling his art at street festivals and at outdoor venues such as Justin Herman Plaza.

Giving up the itinerant artist's life for a permanent home on Columbus suits Craig just fine. Even though many of his photos are of local subjects that the discriminating tourist would want to take home, Craig says 50 percent of his trade is with locals.

His business is doing well, he says. But don't come looking for him on Tuesday. He is one of the holdouts in the digital revolution, and Tuesday is his day in the darkroom.

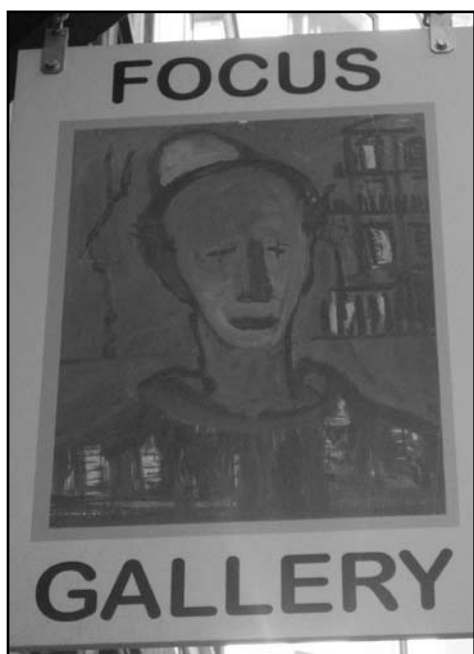
## FOCUS GALLERY

1534 GRANT AVE.

Jon Perino, the owner of the Focus Gallery, situated on an artsy block of upper Grant between Aria and Macchiarini Creative Design, seems a perfect fit for our neighborhood. A onetime Caff  Trieste employee and student at the Art Institute, he sees his space as a place where local art and literature meet. So, for instance, recent shows have featured the painting of poets Lawrence Ferlinghetti and Jack Hirshman.

Perino has traveled to many locations to take photographs, most recently in Latin America and Budapest, Hungary. Along the way, he has picked up an eclectic collection of art, some of which one sees on the walls of the gallery. "I like to think what I have represents something of a history of modern art," he says.

He has been the proprietor of Focus Gallery, where he also does framing, for about a year, since moving from Polk Gulch. Business is not bad, he says. "This neighborhood is a little bit like Budapest. The more well-to-do folks, who live up the hill, come down to support us."



## GALLERY 28

1228 GRANT AVE.

Gallery owner Ethel Jimenez began taking photographs when she was 16, but took a long-term professional detour into a career as an insurance broker. Two years ago, when her business dried up, she decided to take a daring move and acquired a gallery space on Grant. "Right in the depths of the recession; smart business move," she says. But the gallery has survived as a location for Ethel to show her photographs and for local artists to display their work. Upcoming is her second-annual competitive exhibition.

Since coming to the neighborhood, Ethel has very much become involved in community good works. Her gallery has been the site of two fundraisers for North Beach Citizens, one a display of decorated skateboards by local artists and the other, "Vinyl Transformations," in which artists were challenged to transform a vinyl record into a piece of art.



Recently, Ethel was seen at another North Beach Citizens' fundraising event — busing tables at the organization's annual dinner.

## GALLERY 454

454 COLUMBUS AVE.

Anyone who has a doubt that Christopher Jernberg's Gallery 454 is not your generic whatever-the-tourists-want kind of place need only glance in the gallery's window where a life-size military tank fills most of the space. The tank, created from wood products by curator Nick Flatt, was constructed in the gallery in four months and can be purchased for \$100,000. In case the piece does not sell in San Francisco, Flatt, an Academy of Art alum who also creates portraits in the Chuck Close style, will disassemble it and move it to a Los Angeles gallery where perhaps money for cutting-edge art flows more freely.

Gallery owner Jernberg, who teaches at the Academy of Art, says his space is committed to featuring work which is "special, contemporary and provocative." That is not to say he wants to irritate the neighbors. A work that the more squeamish among us might consider pornographic has been moved to a back wall.



## ARATA FINE ARTS GALLERY

450 COLUMBUS AVE.

Next door to Gallery 454 is a space owned by Geri Arata, another Academy of Art student, but one with a very different focus. After Geri graduated in the 1980s with an art degree from San Francisco State, she took up other media, creating everything from ceramics to



jewelry to porcelain dolls. For 10 years she operated the successful Village Crafters in Castro Valley that featured the work of local artists. In the meantime, she returned to painting, but is now focusing on the techniques of the Old Masters. She took intensive workshops in Texas and found instructors at the Academy of Art with skill and respect for academic art.

"I noticed that painters trained in classical techniques don't really have the venue they should have in San Francisco," she says. So when a space opened up on Columbus Avenue at a price she could afford, she decided to change that. She features artists who make use of the techniques of the centuries old Italian greats. Her work reflects not only their techniques, but often their subjects. Where else can one go to find a large painting of Hercules and the Golden Apples treated without irony?

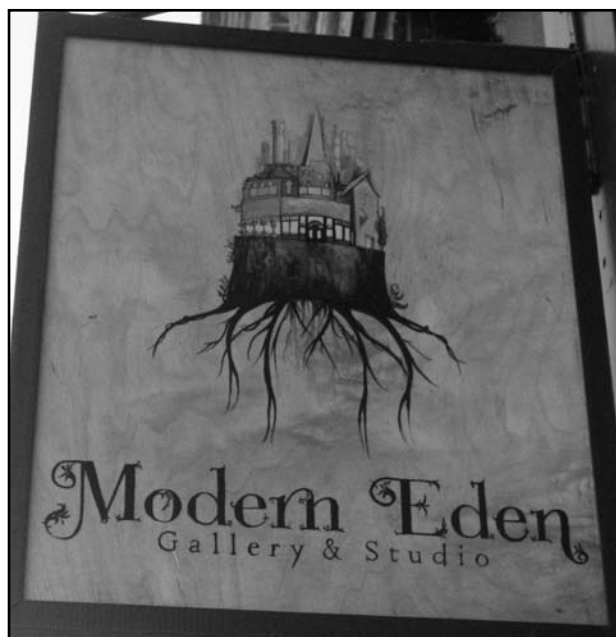
## MODERN EDEN

403 FRANCISCO ST.

This gallery is owned by a young couple, who live a few doors down the street, jeweler Kim Larsen and painter Bradley Platz. Platz's paintings might best be described as "academic surrealism." He's created, for instance, a realistic crucifixion scene, which takes a startling twist that is more appropriately viewed than described.

The gallery's name suggests the combination of old and new art that the couple brings to its curated shows. For instance, the work of Sergio Lopez in the gallery's current exhibit features classic nudes, but embellished with gauzy flowery filigree.

The large, white-walled gallery, with its very high ceilings, is as inviting a venue for art as one will find in the neighborhood. The couple does not rent out the space, but relies on a stable of local artists whose work they want to showcase. In June, they will be celebrating their first anniversary with a show featuring 16 local artists whose pieces they believe deserve to be seen. Visitors to this event's opening may also be entertained by the couple's dog, Dozer, who on the occasion of my visit was living up to his name.







# PARKS, TREES & BIRDS REPORT



By Judy Irving

## Washington Square Large Tree Donation: Jack Early Bequest

Five large evergreen trees will soon be planted in Washington Square, thanks to a bequest from the late Jack Early, whose motto was "Keep the Hill Green!" Craig Heckman, working with Rec/Park staff and gardeners, recently selected locations for the big trees: two Italian stone pines along Stockton, two deodar cedars in the northeast corner and one Canary Island pine in the northwest corner. As soon as exploratory holes are dug and it is determined that the locations can handle large (48 inch) trees, Craig and a representative from Rec/Park will choose the best specimens at Valley Crest, California's largest tree nursery.

Rec/Park has agreed to stage a planting celebration with THD, which should happen before the end of May, if all goes well. We will e-mail news of this event as soon as it's scheduled. Just as Ken Maley did for the Friends of Washington Square planting in February, I will purchase a few bottles of champagne for this event, which will be on ice at Café Divine for imbibing after we plant the trees. Can't wait!

You, too, can participate in keeping Telegraph Hill green: make a gift or bequest to the Telegraph Hill Dwellers'-affiliated nonprofit land trust, the Northeast San Francisco Conservancy, at 470 Columbus Avenue, Suite 211, San Francisco, CA 94133.

These trees are BIG! And beautiful. See photo

## Montgomery Street stone pine

After being bashed again by a garbage truck, the beleaguered stone pine finally has its vertical support in place, with a chicane curving around it. Traffic has



One of five new trees to be transported to Washington Square.

to slow down, not only because of the chicane, but because of the fire hydrant with its curb bulb-out on the sidewalk opposite the tree. There isn't much clearance between these two new curbs. ADA ramps have also been installed on the sidewalks.

The project took much longer and was much more expensive than anticipated, but none of that was the tree's fault! The city chose to install ADA ramps and build a bulb-out around the fire hydrant, but then a worker dropped a tool down the hole that broke a water pipe, torrential rains delayed progress, etc. Now, finally, it's done.

In addition to the five trees donated by THD, the Friends of Washington Square will donate another three michelia (flowering trees in the magnolia family) and a mayten, which will replace the Italian stone pine that fell over after heavy rains, crushing a bench, but happily no people, in the southwest corner of the park. That stone pine had been crowded for many years by the encroaching street trees, and had been forced to grow only on one side. Thus, it was side-heavy, so when the rains soaked the soil in that corner, which is already a marshy area, it fell. The problem in this case was jurisdictional: the street trees are the responsibility of DPW, and the park trees are the responsibility of Rec/Park. Ken Maley of FOWS (Friends of Washington Square) did get DPW to prune their ficus a few months ago, but it was too late. The mayten will be happier than the stone pine in that corner near Columbus and Union.



## ONE VOTE FOR PRESERVATION

*The following letter was sent by THD Board member Judy Irving to the Board of Supervisors Land Use Committee, chaired by Supervisor Scott Wiener, in advance of the committee's May 2 hearing on historical preservation as a city priority.*

I live in the last artists' compound on Telegraph Hill, the cluster of pre-1906 earthquake cottages known as the "Heslett Compound." Two other compounds have been razed and replaced by bland, featureless condos that enriched developers, but not the neighborhood. One is on Union Street near Calhoun Terrace, the other on Greenwich Street opposite Julius' Castle.

In 2001, the Heslett Compound was put on the market. At the time, I was living with Mark Bittner, who was caretaker of one of the cottages, and we'd both fallen in love with the place. Rather than admit defeat and move away, I decided that we were meant to be here because we'd made "The Wild Parrots of Telegraph Hill" next door, and it felt right that we should stay on the Hill. I put together a group of people to make an offer on the seven dilapidated cottages and three lots on the Greenwich Steps.

Alas, a developer bested our offer and we were given eviction notices. At the end of the eviction waiting period, the developer lowered his offer, saying the cottages could not be saved; he would remove them and build condos. His lower offer reflected his need to spend money on demolition and new construction. Our group, which included a freelance writer, filmmaker and architect, came back to the seller with a final offer, just a tiny bit above the developer's lower bid. To make a long story short, the artists got the compound.

We'd agreed that we wanted to fix up the old cottages, rather than destroy them. Built between the 1850s and the 1880s, they'd been rented by cannery workers, artists and longshoremen and had been owned by sea captains, a dancer and a graphic designer. All the cottages felt special, despite needing repairs and paint. We agreed not to expand any cottage's footprint or envelope. No building is more than two stories high, and there is open space in and around the compound. I worked out an agreement with our neighbor, who purchased the lot with no cottages on it, to have a conservation easement donated to a garden conservancy, so the property would remain a garden forever. Please visit 235-237 Greenwich Steps and see for yourself: without city support or tax breaks, we have preserved the Heslett Compound. Why? Because it's a lovely place to live and a lovely way to live.

Historic preservation is not just about rules and regulations. It's what many of us want and strive for because we value the quality of life in San Francisco: We want to live in a unique, human-scale, beautiful place. Quality of life is worth more than money.





# DAUGHTER of a SUNSET SCAVENGER

## An excerpt from the THD Oral History Project's Interview with Ines Belli

By Audrey Tomaselli

There was a time when hiring a moving truck at the corner of Union and Columbus was about as easy as hailing a cab is today — maybe easier. All around Washington Square, draymen parked horse and cart, looking to carry the next load. Around 1918, the mother of Ines Belli took advantage of this convenience when she decided her boys — who were later to become a judge and a lawyer — were being blamed in their Lombard Street neighborhood for vandalism they didn't commit. "We're moving," said Rose Molinari.

"What about my wine?" said Ines's father, Giovanni.

"I don't care about your wine," said Rose. "We're leaving tomorrow."

So Rose went to the square and hired the movers who transported the family to 948 Union, a property that Ines's father had built for income, and where Ines Belli has now lived for all but three of her 88 years.

Ines Belli told this story, and many others, as part of the Telegraph Hill Dwellers' Oral History Project. Reading these interviews, one enters a North Beach time warp, where ATM machines and cellular-phone stores don't exist; instead, there are the shops and businesses of a bustling turn-of-the-20th-century immigrant community.

You're transported to a world where one purchases a funeral wreath at the Azzaro Flower Shop — site of the current day Caffé Roma. Or you cross the street to the Lippi Brothers, now La Boulangerie, to shop for dinner at the "most gorgeous vegetable store you ever saw. You'd go there and they'd wrap everything in a piece of newspaper. You'd get your carrots, your beans and anything that went into minestrone."

Ines and the other contributors to this project are tangible links to North Beach's past. They know, for example, that the word ANCHOR, spelled out in tiles at 515 Columbus (in front of the U.S. Restaurant), come from a drug store by that name that was once at that address. And they know the real use of the still existing "hanging roofs" — roofs with clotheslines on them, often surrounded by a picket fence — where "everyone would take a great basket of wet clothes and go up three flights. And you'd go hang everything — diapers — everything."

As important as these accounts are for helping us preserve the memories of an earlier time, Ines and the other respondents also provide a glimpse into a generation of immigrants that feeds the diversity that is America.

Most everyone on the block where Ines lived came from the small towns around Chiavari, Italy, and none of them left much behind worth hanging onto. The Molinari family came from hill country. After all, Ines says, "What can you grow on a hill?" In 1929, the Molinaris, now prosperous, returned to Italy to examine the property still owned by the family. Ines's oldest brother looked at the land and told her father, "Whatever you do, don't leave it to me."

"It was like that," says Ines.

For the most part, the early arrivals were single men. "At first," says Ines, they came to make money and go home, "but then, when my father's generation came, their idea was to stay."



Ines's father and uncle, circa 1912.

PHOTO COURTESY INES BELL

Ines's father went to work as a garbage man for the Torres company. He soon bought his own horse and wagon, and founded the Scavengers' Protective Union. That eventually became the Sunset Scavenger Co. To this day, one of Ines's sons remains involved with the company.

### The Immigrant Ethic

Like many others from immigrant families, Ines has stories of honesty and hard work paying off. "There was a store on Geary called Nathan Dorman, and they had all beautiful crystal and dishes, and Papa had them as a customer. And one day Papa saw this big box outside, and he looked and saw what he thought was glass (he didn't know anything about crystal). Papa told Mr. Dorman about it, and Mr. Dorman never forgot his honesty. Whenever Papa asked for a raise, he gave it to him without question."

### Buried Treasure?

Frugality, as well, was part of the immigrant ethic. "My father decided to put some money away in case another crash came. So he put — I think — \$500 in a tin box in the basement. The trouble was he forgot

## Semaphore Classic

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about it for many years. When he opened the box up the money had turned to mush. All these Italians were great at hiding money away. I wouldn't be surprised if there are boxes hidden out there in all those backyards we see from this window. And then they die and nobody knows it's there."

Over the years, this collection of immigrant families developed the traditions and institutions of a community. There was, of course, the church. Ines remembers the construction of SS Peter and Paul's in

the 1920s. She recalls her communion when only the basement was finished. "We used to go to the old church on Grant and Filbert for catechism. But my confirmation was held upstairs. They finished the new church between my communion and my confirmation."

Ines belonged to the Handmaidens. It was, she says, "a Catholic thing... We had little white outfits and we marched in the Columbus Day Parade. I suppose we were ready to be sainted, but I doubt it."

Then there were the social clubs. "Papa belonged to the Balilla Club. They would have dances and picnics — family affairs. We'd go to these picnics and everyone would bring their jug of wine in a doctor's case. See, it was Prohibition."

"Balilla was some kind of Genovese hero, who killed someone with a slingshot. The men had their meetings down in Garibaldi Hall on Broadway between Columbus and Kearny. It was very exclusive. There were only 30 or so members. And new members only got in when someone died."

Of course, there was the important community business of getting the young folks married to an Italian. Typically, a lot of these pairings were sparked at weddings. "That's how you met people: at weddings." Ines' two oldest boys met their wives [who are sisters] at a wedding, and Ines met her future husband, Rino, the same way.



For the whole story of Ines Belli as well as other personal dramas collected by the Oral History Project contact Audrey Tomaselli at 391-1792. Members of THD may borrow these transcripts for a week. Copies are also available at the San Francisco History Center at the Main Library.

## Longshoremen *continued from page 5*

and/or low local taxes.

So, other than those longshoremen enjoying retirement, where are the San Francisco dock workers today?

The majority of work by ILWU members is done in relation to arriving and departing cruise ships. If a cruise ship debarks 2,000 passenger and embarks 2,000, some 35 longshoremen will be used on the job. About three cruise ships come in each month. There are

a couple of docks equipped for containers to the south of AT&T Park. Beyond that, San Francisco longshoremen will be traveling, for the foreseeable future, to work in Oakland, Benicia, Crockett and Richmond.

Meanwhile, the discussion of new uses for our once booming waterfront continues.



Thanks to Susan Goldstein of the S.F. Main Library History Center, who put me in touch with Harvey Schwartz. This story would not have been possible without the support of Mr. Schwartz, author of "Solidarity Stories: An Oral History of the ILWU," and curator of the ILWU Oral History Collection at the union's San Francisco headquarters.





By Kathleen Cannon

Spring has sprung, and the Alfa Romeo Spider 77 pops its top and seeks new adventures.

## Native American Poetry Beats the Drums in North Beach

On March 11, Tony Serra's office on Broadway hosted the Poets' Gallery (organized by Philip Hackett) in which the theme was Native American poetry. The event was a rich tapestry of Native American poets, storytellers and musicians, many of whom traveled a great distance to deliver vivid memories and tales of childhood, family and friends. The audience was enchanted by the poets' works on their ancestors. In "Bush Ghost," Geoffrey Todd Lake (Nez Pierce) told of his mother, who worked for the Buffalo Bill Wild West Show. Linda Noel of Ukiah recited from "Mountain Stitch." Lake stole the show with his poetry, prose and humor. "What do you call a poet without an 'old lady'?" Homeless." Or was that Luke Warm Water? They were all great, but the law offices were so jammed the poets were hard to track.

## Showcasing S.F. Bay, "The Natural Amphitheater"

At the S.F. Art Institute, Michael Corbett, author of "Port City," and Mike Buhler, of S.F. Heritage, held a vivid presentation on San Francisco's maritime history and the influences that formed the development of the northern waterfront. The finger piers were based on New York City's 19th century waterfront.

In a question-and-answer session with port representatives and District 3 Supervisor David Chiu, THD members were guaranteed impromptu highrises were not a part of the deal. Chiu said his position was clear, "There would be no highrises on the waterfront" as a result of the America's Cup deal. Of foremost concern were the projects to be completed prior to the 2013 event, how the great number of tourists (some 250,000) would be accommodated, as well as crew support and media. Some 18 groups will oversee the environmental review, construction and preparation. Aaron Peskin

# THE ALFA NOSE



Native American poet reads at Tony Serra's office.

PHOTO: KATHLEEN CANNON

noted that historically the host city [usually] wins the cup. San Francisco may thus host the event numerous times. Kudos to Termeh Yeghiazarian for her delicate touch as MC.

## Garden Epiphanies

On Feb. 23, heralding spring, Julie Jaycox exhibited her botanical photographs at Canessa Gallery. Attendees to "Garden Epiphanies" were asked to "bring something from their garden," a flower, plant, or something that epitomized their passion for gardening. Julie's stunning photos were taken at Fort Mason historic garden. Several of the 20 attendees brought a plant (Julie brought a pyramidal succulent), but everyone had a fascinating garden experience to share. Anne Halsted recounted how invasive roots, though beautiful, compromised the foundation of her historic Telegraph Hill cottage. Miriam Owen began gardening as a prison volunteer. One of her students consequently opened a garden business.

## Celebrate St. Francis of Assisi

Easter eve volunteers worked feverously to ready the chapel to receive worshipers for the evening celebration and Easter Day. Closed for nearly a year for seismic work, the National Shrine of St. Francis reopened under the Capuchin Order. The interior is remodeled to reflect the Italian connection with St. Francis of Assisi, but the chapel is still quiet, reflective, with a connection to a less

earthly world. The new rector, the Rev. Gregory Coiro, ordered letterhead envelopes that declared the North Beach church, "The Heart of San Francisco." Entrance to the Porziuncola is through the gift shop, on the Columbus Avenue corner.

## Grant Avenue at Vallejo

Move down, move down. When the Porziuncola moved back into St. Francis, Al's Attire took the Grant Avenue corner space, and a *Semaphore* ad, grazie! A Mediterranean blue taqueria opened next door. Next to it, is a storefront with no name, where three young, entrepreneurial partners sat on a church bench left over from the St. Francis gift shop and discussed their concept: T-shirts and what to call their store. Grassroots local merchandizing, but T-shirts in North Beach? Worth watching.

## Boat Days and Nights at the Dolphin Club

Every Tuesday evening from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m., volunteers gather in the Dolphin Club boathouse to hammer, sand and varnish boats under the guidance of boat builder Jon Bielinski. Workers used to be treated to pizza until Connie Wellen changed the menu. Now the boat nighters work hearty and eat healthy dinners prepared by member volunteers. Herbs come from Wellen's garden plot at Fort Mason. Some nights there are 20 diners. Other nights, such as when the volunteers moved the historic barge Wieland, there were 60.

What is the difference between the Dolphin Club and the South End Rowing Club? Very little, other than that they were established four years apart [1877 vs. 1873]. The South End holds its boat night on Thursdays. Both clubs are open to the public during certain hours for a small stipend. Membership offers a lot. Check their websites. Connie notes that during the summer, sailing on the historic scow schooner Alma is available to the public at [www.maritime.org](http://www.maritime.org). The historic clubs offer good company, a chance to hone carpentry skills and a unique view of historic San Francisco from both shore and bay. When the America's Cup work begins along the waterfront, the barge may offer an answer to transportation — row to work and back. ♦

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# WATERFRONT COMMITTEE THE NORTHEAST WATERFRONT COMMUNITY VISION BEGINS a DIALOGUE

By Andy Katz

THD Waterfront Committee chairperson

In February 2009, District 3 Supervisor David Chiu requested that the Port of San Francisco work with the city's Planning Department to analyze and develop appropriate uses for the seawall lots along the northeast Embarcadero. The Northeast Embarcadero Study Design Recommendations and Urban Design Guidelines were the result of this collaboration. Many neighborhood residents, who attended meetings to solicit public input for the northeast Embarcadero study, became frustrated that the planning process did not take their comments and community needs to heart. To them, this was not a truly comprehensive planning process, and comprehensive planning was the least that could be expected when the jewel of our waterfront was involved.

The Northeast Waterfront Community Vision was partly born out of this frustration. More important, it was an attempt to begin a true community-based discussion of the use of the seawall lots on the inland side of the Embarcadero from the Ferry Building to North

Point Street. Friends of Golden Gateway (FOGG), the Telegraph Hill Dwellers (THD), the Golden Gateway Tenants Association (GGTA) and the Barbary Coast Neighborhood Association (BCNA), and other residents and local merchants, came together to brainstorm at summer and fall workshops to achieve a consensus based on community input and needs. The resulting plan was prepared by Asian Neighborhood Design and planning consultant Brad Paul.

The vision for the northeast waterfront was articulated as follows: "Community members see the development of the northeast waterfront as a necklace of intimate green spaces, between a low-rise mix of commercial, residential, cultural, and recreational uses that honor the waterfront's history and topography, connected to the city's neighborhoods through strong pedestrian-friendly streets."

Community members wanted not only to preserve, but also to expand active recreation space and parks. They articulated a desire for better connections between Chinatown, North Beach and the Embarcadero. To

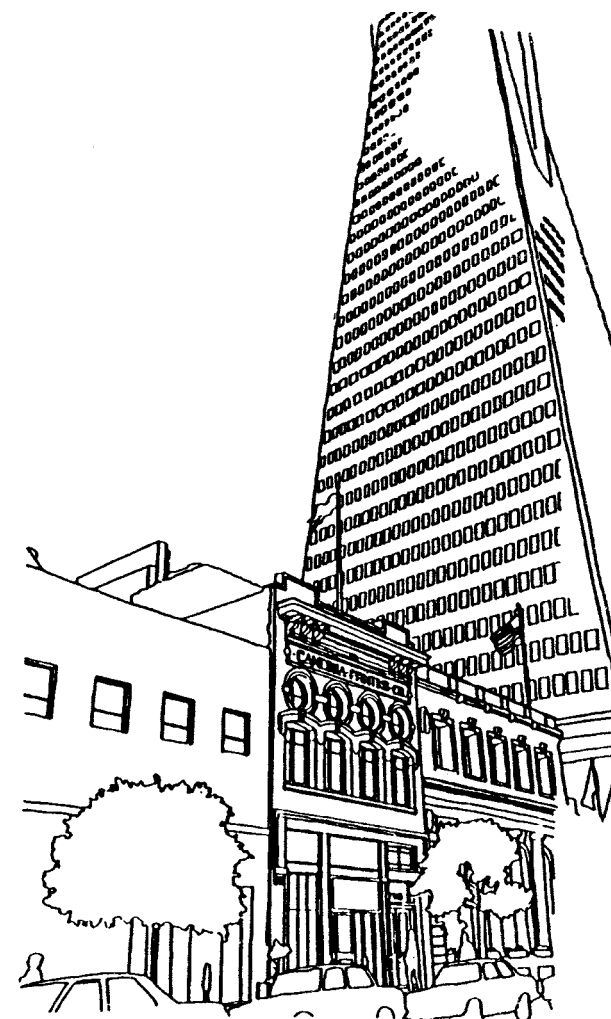
make this possible they recognized the need to improve pedestrian, bicycle and transit access to and from the neighborhoods to the Embarcadero. They also wanted to more efficiently utilize existing parking rather than build large and expensive parking garages.

Neighborhood residents wanted to come up with alternatives for the port's seawall lots that the community could not only support, but that were also economically feasible and politically palatable.

Now that San Francisco is involved in intense planning stages for the America's Cup, we can look to the Northeast Waterfront Community Vision as a blueprint to advocate proposals already articulated for the northeast waterfront. We have strength in numbers knowing that many neighborhood groups, including THD, are working to push for this vision.

"A Community Vision for San Francisco's Northeast Waterfront" can be viewed on the THD website at [www.thd.org](http://www.thd.org).





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Look to the THD website for information on THD events. **Log on to <http://www.thd.org>**

The winner of the *Semaphore* Picture Caption Contest will be announced in our next issue.

THD Welcomes the following new members and members who have rejoined, March-April: New members: Halli & Robert Celli, Ibby Clifford, Cynthia Cristilli, Lynn Sanchez, Susan Snow, and Donald Yates. Former members who have rejoined: Anne Buchanan, Jane & Neal Lozins, and Bill Thornton.

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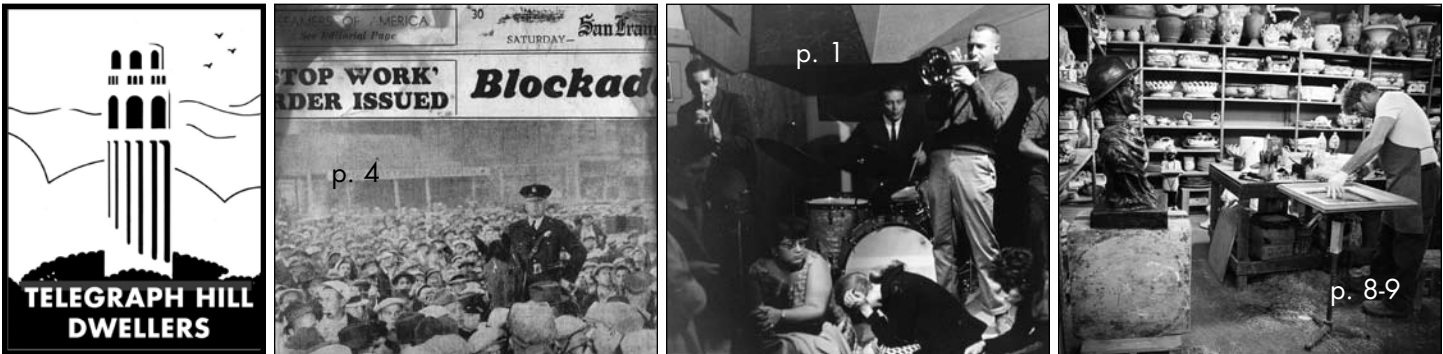
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The Semaphore

A Publication of the TELEGRAPH HILL DWELLERS

Issue 194

Spring 2011

